

URGENT ACTION

TORTURED GERMAN-IRANIAN SENTENCED TO DEATH

German-Iranian political dissident, Jamshid Sharmahd, is at risk of execution after being sentenced to death for “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel-arz*) following a grossly unfair trial. Since July 2020, the Iranian authorities have been subjecting him to enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment including through prolonged solitary confinement and denial of adequate healthcare.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei
c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium

Dear Mr Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,

German-Iranian political dissident Jamshid Sharmahd, aged 68, is at risk of execution after Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced him to death for “spreading corruption on earth” following a sham trial, which concluded on 10 January 2023. On 21 February 2023, the judiciary’s website reported his conviction, writing that “he had intended to carry out 23 terror acts and was successful in carrying out five”, in apparent reference to a 2008 bombing in Shiraz, Fars province. Jamshid Sharmahd has repeatedly denied these accusations, including during his trial, which was grossly unfair. Iranian authorities have denied him his rights to an independent lawyer of his own choosing, to adequate defence, to be protected from torture and other ill-treatment, to the presumption of innocence and to be tried by a competent and impartial tribunal. The authorities aired his forced “confessions” in a propaganda video accusing him of “terrorism” before his trial begun, and state media repeatedly re-broadcast it during the trial and following the verdict. His government-appointed lawyer told his family days before the verdict was announced that he believed his death sentence would be carried out unless they engaged in “diplomatic” activities for a prisoner swap. Relatives said that Iranian security agents monitoring his calls to his family have indicated their wish to exchange him for former Iranian official, Asadollah Asadi, who is serving a 20-year sentence in Belgium.

Iranian authorities have subjected Jamshid Sharmahd to an enforced disappearance, a crime under international law, for about 32 months as they continue to refuse to reveal the location of his detention to his family and independent lawyer. Since late September 2021, he has only been permitted three brief phone calls to his family. During these calls, he revealed that he is being tortured and otherwise ill-treated, including by being held in prolonged solitary confinement since his abduction by Iranian officials in the UAE in July 2020 and his forcible transfer to Iran. He also said he is denied all contact with other prisoners and is forced to sleep on the floor in a small room, where he is unable to distinguish between day and night. Authorities are also denying him adequate healthcare, including dental care, and are routinely delaying his access to medications required for his Parkinson’s disease, resulting in severe body aches and difficulty breathing. During his last phone call to his family on 14 February 2023, he said his health has severely deteriorated, and he found it difficult to maintain his balance while standing up.

I urge you to immediately quash the unjust conviction and death sentence of Jamshid Sharmahd, reveal his fate and whereabouts and, in light of his arbitrary detention, immediately release him. Pending his release, ensure that he is given regular access to family, adequate medical care, including dental care, a lawyer of his choosing and consular assistance from the German authorities. He must also be protected from further torture and other ill-treatment. An effective and impartial investigation into his claims of torture and other ill-treatment must be conducted, with a view of bringing those responsible to justice in fair trial.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Jamshid Sharmahd, a resident of the USA and a journalist, created a website, Tondar, for the Kingdom Assembly of Iran (also known as Anjoman-e Padeshahi-ye Iran) which is an opposition collective that advocates for an end to the Islamic Republic of Iran, including through violence. Jamshid Sharmahd hosted its radio and video broadcasts, including by reading out the website's content, some of which was posted anonymously. The website included statements from the Kingdom Assembly of Iran claiming responsibility for explosions inside Iran. Jamshid Sharmahd has repeatedly denied his involvement in the violent acts attributed to him by the authorities.

On 1 August 2020, the Ministry of Intelligence announced in a statement that its secret agents, referred to as the "unknown soldiers of Imam Zaman" had arrested Jamshid Sharmahd following a "complex operation" without providing further details. The same day, the Minister of Intelligence, Mahmoud Alavi, stated that Jamshid Sharmahd was "heavily supported by the intelligence services of the USA and Israel" and that he had been "led" into Iran through "complex operations" and taken into the custody of the Ministry of Intelligence. This was widely understood to have meant that he was abducted by Iran's intelligence agents from abroad – Jamshid Sharmahd had been in the UAE – and forcibly taken to Iran. Following his abduction, Ministry of Intelligence agents told Jamshid Sharmahd that he was held in Tehran's Evin prison, but by late 2020 he told his family he was no longer there without being permitted to say more about his location. During a 23 March 2021 phone call, Jamshid Sharmahd said he had lost nearly 20kg and that only two of his teeth remained intact without being able to elaborate further, adding that he was only able to eat by using his gums to try to chew food.

Iranian state television aired propaganda videos showing him "confessing" to having a role in an April 2008 explosion in Shiraz, Fars province, in which 14 people were killed according to Iranian state media. In one propaganda video, released in January 2021, his forced "confessions" were interspersed with clips of his broadcasts for the Kingdom Assembly of Iran with him identified by the narrator as the group's leader and a "terrorist", undermining his presumption of innocence and right not to self-incriminate. Throughout Jamshid Sharmahd's investigation and trial, proceedings, he was denied access to an independent lawyer of his own choosing and the right to defend himself. His government-appointed lawyer told his family on 2 July 2022 that there was "no point" to him objecting against the Revolutionary Court admitting his forced "confessions" as evidence. Prior to this, on 9 May 2021, the government-appointed lawyer said that without payment of US\$250,000 from the family, he would not defend Jamshid Sharmahd in court and would only "sit there [in court]". He was convicted of the charge of "corruption on earth" which is not clearly defined in law, and as such contravenes the principle of legality. His appeal in front of the Supreme Court is pending.

Since 2019, Amnesty International has documented other cases involving the abduction of dissidents based abroad by Iran's security and intelligence agents and their forcible return to Iran. Dissident journalist Rouhollah Zam was abducted during a visit to Iraq in October 2019 by the Revolutionary Guards, apparently with the assistance of Iraqi intelligence authorities, and forcibly returned to Iran. He was [executed](#) in December 2020 following a grossly unfair trial. Habib Chaab, an Iranian-Swedish dual national, currently detained in Iran, was abducted in Turkey in October 2020, and removed to Iran through what the Iranian authorities called "specialist and combined actions". Turkish authorities wrote in a January 2021 [reply](#) to a communication from several UN Special Rapporteurs that he was "illegally smuggled to Iran the day after his arrival in Turkey." Habib Chaab was sentenced to death on 6 December 2022 and his conviction and sentence were upheld by the Supreme Court on 12 March 2023, raising concerns that his execution is imminent.

Jamshid Sharmahd's enforced disappearance is taking place amidst the Iranian authorities' well-documented pattern of arbitrarily detaining dual and foreign nationals as leverage, as highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, mostly recently in a July 2022 [report](#), and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. In light of the Iranian authorities' practice of using detained dual and foreign nationals as leverage, Amnesty International has repeatedly [urged](#) all states whose nationals are or have been detained at any point in Iran to promptly examine whether the deprivation of liberty amounts to an act of hostage-taking, and if so, take all appropriate measures to ensure accountability.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 29 May 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Jamshid Sharmahd (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5909/2022/en/>